



ARTS INTEGRATED LEARNING (AIL): AN EMERGING APPROACH FOR FOSTERING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Every child is special and different from one another, which means they will grow and develop at their own pace and in their own unique way. Each child has their own individual strengths, weaknesses, and abilities. Therefore, it is important to recognize and respect these differences while providing the necessary support and guidance to help each child reach their full potential. Arts can significantly foster children's overall growth and holistic development. This article aims at exploring the concept of holistic development and Art Integrated Learning by throwing light on how Arts can be useful in promoting holistic development in school children.

KEYWORDS: Arts, Art Integrated Learning (AIL), Holistic Development, School Students.

1. INTRODUCTION

Starting from the era of Rigveda, the education system in ancient times underwent gradual transformations, placing great emphasis on nurturing the holistic growth of individuals, encompassing their inner and outer selves. This comprehensive system prioritized the moral, physical, spiritual, and intellectual dimensions of life (Ancient Education System of India. 2022)¹. Art has played a vital role in Indian culture and education since ancient times, people in India have always been raised with a deep appreciation for various artistic expressions. In earlier periods, Art thrived within Indian households, where people naturally absorbed the domestic traditions of artistic practices. They gained hands-on experience by engaging in activities such as creating homemade bamboo baskets, embroidering pillow covers and bed sheets, creating a piece of jewellery, and producing pottery (NCERT. 2008)². Children also participated along with their elders in activities such as designing rangoli, singing soothing lullabies, assisting adults in crafting handmade utensils, painting pictures, performing in Ramlila, chanting hymns, crafting decorative pieces and many more which ultimately resulted in the overall sound development of the children.

In recent times, the rapid progress of Science and Technology has led to the undervaluation of Arts in educational practices, and even students and their parents tend to overlook its significance. But research studies have shown a significant positive impact of Arts on the physical, social, emotional, and intellectual domains of personality (Kong, S. M. 2005)³. Rabindranath Tagore held a strong conviction that the aim of education should encompass the holistic growth of students, which could only be achieved through the integration of Arts. He believed that Arts played a crucial role in nurturing the development of one's entire personality and enhancing their perception of truth and reality (as cited in Lesar, I. 2015)⁴. Highlighting the significance of Arts William, S. N. (2020)⁵ states that Art is a learning process that enables children to explore, experiment, and creatively interpret their environment. Through this process, children develop skills in logical thinking, problem-solving, interpersonal interactions, and hand-eye coordination. Additionally, when art is emphasized and taught

effectively, it also promotes sensory development in young children. Even in the 21st century, the pursuit of holistic and comprehensive development of students' personalities remains a priority. Therefore, alongside the advancements in science and technology, there is a growing need for the recognition of the inclusion of arts in educational practices and curricula.

2. MEANING AND CONCEPT OF ART-INTEGRATED LEARNING

Art-integrated learning (AIL) is an educational approach that incorporates the arts, such as visual arts, music, dance, drama, and literature, into various academic subjects. It aims to enhance the learning experience by using artistic processes, techniques, and creative expressions to deepen understanding and engage students in a multi-dimensional way. AIL encourages students to explore connections between art and other subjects, fostering creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and self-expression. National Educational Policy (2020)⁶ defines Art integration as "a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for the learning of concepts across subjects" p.12. Another popular definition of Art integration given by the John F. Kennedy Center of Performing Arts defines it as "an approach to teaching in which students construct and demonstrate understanding through an art form. Students engage in a creative process which connects an art form and another subject and meets evolving objectives" (as cited in Carey, L. 2017)⁷. The Kennedy Center outlines three ways in which arts can be incorporated into education first is 'Arts as the curriculum' under this student study specific Art forms as part of their regular classes. This approach involves dedicated classes or programs that focus on teaching various artistic disciplines. The Second comprises of 'Arts-enhanced curriculum' in which the Arts are used as a means to enhance or explore concepts in other subjects. Teachers do not necessarily need specialized training in the Arts for this approach, as it primarily involves integrating artistic activities into the existing curriculum and the third one is the 'Arts-integrated curriculum' in this approach, the arts serve as the primary method for exploring the curriculum. Lessons are designed to have dual objectives, incorporating both the Art form and the content knowledge. This method requires

intentional planning and collaboration between Arts and Non-Arts teachers to create interdisciplinary learning experiences (as cited in Carey, L. 2017)⁷.

3. ROLE OF ART INTEGRATED LEARNING IN HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

The term "holistic development" describes an individual's overall growth and progress in a number of interrelated areas of their life. Instead of concentrating just on discrete areas of development, it encourages the development of the complete person—physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Holistic development acknowledges the interdependence and mutual effect of these many facets of an individual. According to Andrews et al (2002), Holistic development in children aims to cater to all aspects of a child's life, encompassing their emotional, physical, relational, intellectual, creative, and spiritual needs (as cited in Andam, N. H. 2018)⁸. Jesudason Baskar Jeyaraj (2013) views Holistic child development as a dynamic process that entails the overall growth and transformation of a child in all aspects of their life (as cited in Minz, P. n.d.)⁹. Holistic development encompasses several essential domains of personality, including cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects. Each of these domains plays a significant role in an individual's overall well-being, and their proper functioning is vital for maintaining a healthy and balanced life.

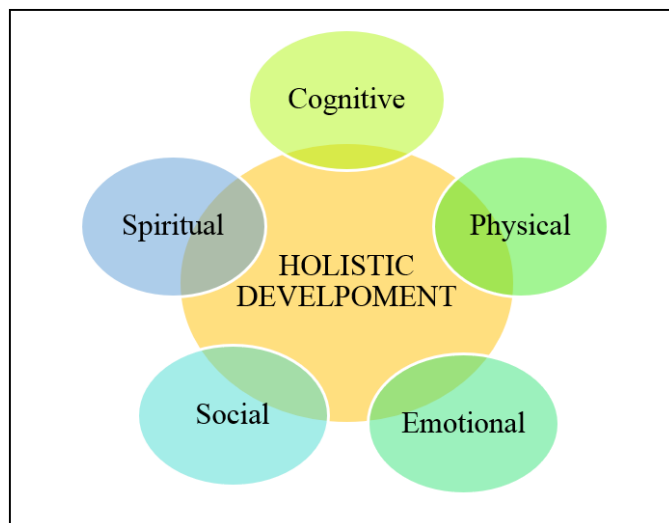


Figure 1: Showing the Broad Domains of Holistic Development

The Arts possess tremendous power in fostering connections and establishing positive links among various domains of human personality. Carroll, K. L. (2006)¹⁰ in this view says that “the expressive Arts are a transformational medium in the sense that they integrate intellect and emotion, thought and feeling, action and response, mind and body, heart and hand”. Engaging children in art-based activities can have a beneficial impact on their holistic development. Teachers should incorporate creative and Art-integrated activities into the teaching-learning process to support and nurture the overall growth of students. Here are some ways that Art activities can support young children's development

3.1 Cognitive Development

Rodriguez, J. M. (2018)¹¹ defines cognitive development as a development that signifies the growth and refinement of intelligence and mental functions that have an impact on processes such as thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving. Children can better learn, understand, analyse, and solve problems when engaged in Art-integrated learning activities. Madrid Academy of Arts. (2023)¹² view that Art provides

children with opportunities to enhance their cognitive abilities, engage with symbolic input, and explore various artistic media. Moreover, art activities serve as a crucial means for children to express themselves, providing valuable insights into their cognitive development and thinking processes. Similar are the views of Eisner, E. (2002)¹³ who states that the Arts instill in children the understanding that problems can have multiple solutions. They also encourage students to think critically and creatively when working with different materials. Additionally, the arts teach children that in complex problem-solving situations, purposes are not fixed but can change depending on circumstances and opportunities.

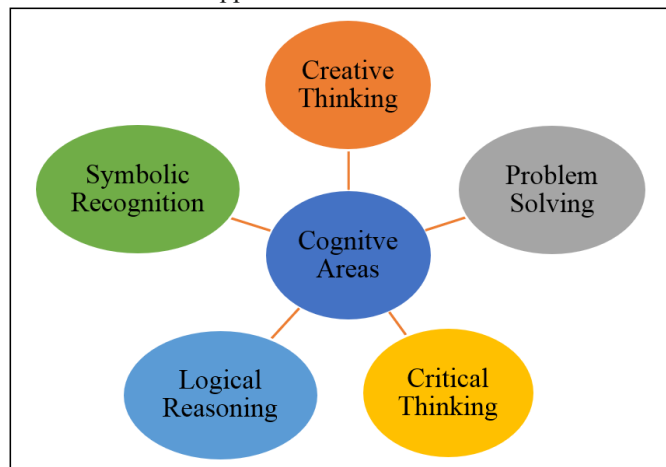


Figure 2: Areas of Cognitive Development Enhanced through Art-Integrated Learning

From the above-mentioned studies, we can witness that by exposing children to the Arts, they develop and refine their cognitive abilities. This exposure leads to enhanced growth in the intellectual and cognitive aspects of their personality.

3.2 Physical Development

Center For Research in Early Childhood. (n.d.)¹⁴ define Physical development as the process of both growth and the acquisition of motor skills necessary for utilizing muscles and body parts. It entails the development of both gross motor skills, which involve larger muscle movements, and fine motor skills, which involve more precise and delicate movements. Engaging in art activities like drawing, painting, sculpting, playing musical instruments, dancing, and drama can improve fine motor skills through precise hand-eye coordination and control of small muscles. These activities also enhance gross motor skills by promoting larger movements, physical coordination, balance, flexibility, and overall body control. Rymanowicz, K. (2015)¹⁵ view that the involvement of children in the Arts like the act of holding pencils, crayons, chalk, and paintbrushes aids in the development of fine motor muscles in children. This progress in muscle development is beneficial for tasks like writing, buttoning a coat, and other activities that necessitate controlled movements. Thus, it can be said that the Arts play a vital role in the physical development of young children, particularly during the early stage of childhood.

3.3 Social Development

Sundram, S. (2020)¹⁶ define social development as the acquisition of skills that enable a child to interact with others in their community. It encompasses the development of individuality, communication skills, and the ability to navigate relationships and handle conflicts with peers. It primarily focuses on the formation of friendships and other social connections. Children's social development is supported by participating in Arts activities by encouraging teamwork,

communication, empathy, and the forming of social relationships. Social development can be enriched through the Arts. Children learn to collaborate, exchange ideas, and hone their collaboration abilities through group performances and collaborative art projects. Horowitz & Webb-Dempsey, (2002) in this regard state that the use of Art techniques involves developing skills and competencies that can have an impact on children's relationships with their peers, teachers, and family members (as cited in Mynaříková, L. 2012)¹⁷. According to Ulutaş and Ersoy (2004) and Toy (2006), when children create artwork in groups, it offers them opportunities to plan and execute their ideas collaboratively. Through this cooperative process, they learn important skills such as sharing objects, active listening, and understanding how and when to work together. This type of art education supports multidimensional development and specifically contributes to the development of social skills (as cited in Yazıcı, E. 2017)¹⁸.

3.4 Emotional Development

Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2022)¹⁹ defines emotional development as the progression of experiencing, expressing, understanding, and regulating emotions that occurs from infancy through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. It involves the growth and transformation of these emotional capacities over time. By offering a platform for emotional expression, exploration, and comprehension, art plays a crucial role in encouraging emotional growth. Children can creatively and nonverbally express and convey their feelings via artistic endeavours. They may explore their inner selves via their art, which encourages introspection and emotional awareness. According to Eisner, E. (2002) & Greene, M. (2001) view that Utilizing art-based techniques and art therapy within a classroom setting has proven to be advantageous in fostering both intellectual and emotional development. It also aids in eliciting emotional responses from children who may struggle to do so in a traditional educational environment (as cited in Mynaříková, L. 2012)²⁰. Highlighting the benefits of Arts Keeney, F. (2000)²¹ states that engaging in the artistic process enables individuals to create a safe space where they can explore and express intense emotions while maintaining a certain level of emotional distance. This allows for a sense of containment and protection when dealing with deeply painful experiences.

3.5 Spiritual and Moral Development

Tang, F. (2022)²² views spirituality as inherent to human beings, including young children, as they possess an innate capacity to perceive and comprehend the world around them with a sense of curiosity, wonder, compassion, and love. Mcleod, S. (2023)²³ defines Moral development as the progressive development of children's understanding of societal standards of right and wrong. It is shaped by social and cultural norms, as well as legal principles within their society. Both Spiritual and Moral development are essential components of an individual's personality and participating in the arts helps to promote moral and spiritual growth. Individuals can explore and strengthen their spiritual ideas and moral ideals through artistic expression and thought. Kamolov, I. B., & Arziyeva, N. (2021)²⁴ view that across all stages of human existence, the role of art has consistently been and will continue to be the representation of life in exquisite forms, aiming to enhance it and guide people towards truth, goodness, and beauty. The Arts provide a platform for students to contemplate and internalize spiritual and moral values such as beauty, creativity, generosity, honesty, discernment, patience, and perseverance. By engaging with the Arts, students tap into their inner emotions and develop a heightened spiritual and moral sensitivity.

4. OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

Art holds significant importance for children, particularly during their early developmental stages. Research studies indicate that engaging in art fosters early childhood brain development. Through art, children actively participate in open-ended play that stimulates their senses and facilitates the development of cognitive, social-emotional, and multisensory skills (Penn State Extension, 2023)²⁵. Arts contribute to participating in creative pursuits and improve cognitive skills including imagination, creativity, and problem-solving. It energizes the mind and promotes the growth of analytical and abstract thinking abilities. The arts offer a platform for emotional expression, enabling people to discover and comprehend their feelings encouraging self-awareness, empathy, and emotional control, it aids in emotional growth. Participating in the Arts encourages teamwork and social connection. It promotes collaboration, communication, and teamwork, aiding in the growth of crucial social abilities like empathy and respect for others. Many artistic disciplines include physical movement and coordination, which helps children's gross and fine motor skills. Body awareness, coordination, and physical dexterity are encouraged by activities like dancing, carving, and playing musical instruments. The arts provide people with a platform to express their distinctive viewpoints, ideologies, and selves. By enabling people to express their ideas, feelings, and experiences verbally and publicly, it aids in the growth of a person's sense of self and confidence. Experiencing art fosters an understanding of the importance of aesthetics, beauty, and artistic expression. It encourages cultural variety, aesthetic appreciation, and the capacity for original and unique interpretations of the outside world. In conclusion, it can be said that the arts are essential for the growth of a person's personality in all spheres, including cognitive, emotional, social, physical, self-identity, and aesthetic sensibility.

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